

## Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 AID-05

PC-01 /063 W

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R 061430Z NOV 75

FM AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1956

INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

DQRUEHZP/AMEMBASSY PANAMA 2904

AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SANJOSE 4716

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, CS

SUBJECT: FIGUERES BACKPEDALS; PRESSURES FOR  
FIGUERES-INSPIRED CHANGES LESSEN

REF: SAN JOSE 4643, 4626, 4614

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: IN HIS FOURTH TELEVISION APPEARANCE  
IN SEVEN DAYS, EX-PRESIDENT JOSE FIGUERES ON NOVEMBER 3  
BACKED AWAY FROM PREVIOUS STATEMENTS ON EXTRA-CONSTITUTIONAL  
POLITICAL REFORM. REACTION TO FIGUERES' EARLIER  
PROPOSALS (SAN JOSE 4614) CONTINUES TO BE PREDOMINANTLY  
NEGATIVE. END SUMMARY.

2. EX-PRESIDENT JOSE FIGUERES ATTEMPTED FURTHER  
CLARIFICATION OF HIS STATEMENTSMade ONE WEEK PREVIOUSLY  
ON THE NEED FOR A ONE-YEAR PERIOD OF GOVERNMENT BY DECREE  
WITH A DENIAL THAT HE PROPOSED OR CALLED FOR AN  
INTERRUPTION OF COSTA RICA'S CONSTITUTIONAL PROCESS.  
"I STATED, BUT I DID NOT PROPOSE," DON PEPE EXPLAINED,  
ADDING THAT WHAT HE SAID COULD NOT BE CONSIDERED A  
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"CALL TO THE COUNTRY". SUCH IMPORTANT POLITICAL

MANIFESTOS ARE WRITTEN, AND DO NOT COME OUT OF A TELEVISION INTERVIEW, DON PEPE NOTED.

3. FIGUERES ONCE AGAIN STATED THAT HIS REMARKS SHOULD NOT BE CONSIDERED AN ATTACK ON THE ODUBER GOVERNMENT, BUT A CRITICISM OF ALL GOVERNMENTS, INCLUDING HIS OWN. IN DENYING THAT HE "PROPOSED" A "DICTATORSHIP", HE ALSO POINTED OUT THAT "A DICTATORSHIP CAN BE AN AUTHORITARIAN AND JURIDICAL GOVERNMENT AND SHOULD NOT BE CONFUSED WITH A TYRANNY". (OPPOSITION PRESS HAS GLEEFULLY PICKED THIS UP). FIGUERES AGAIN NOTED THE DANGER OF A LONG PERIOD OF DECREE RULE, AND REITERATED THAT THAT IS PRECISELY WHY HE SPOKE OF A ONE-YEAR PERIOD ONLY. HE ALSO STATED THAT THE PERIOD OF DECREE RULE SHOULD NOT BE OF ONE PARTY, ADDING THAT A WIDE SECTOR OF TALENTED COSTA RICANS IS NEEDED FOR THE TASK.

4. DISPLAYING ONCE AGAIN FIGUERES' LEGENDARY LOYALTY TO FRIENDS, DON PEPE BRUSHED OFF CRITICISM AGAINST PEOPLE AROUND HIM (MADE BY ASSEMBLY PRESIDENT CARRO) BY STATING THAT THIS WAS A WAY OF ATTACKING FIGUERES WITHOUT CONFRONTING HIM DIRECTLY. FIGUERES REMINDED THAT NO CHARGE EVER MADE AGAINST HIM OR THE PEOPLE AROUND HIM IN THE PAST HAS EVER BEEN PROVEN.

5. FIGUERES ALSO DENIED THAT HE WAS BEING USED AS A LAUNCHING PAD FOR A GROUP OF PEOPLE INTERESTED IN THEIR OWN POLITICAL FUTURE. HE NOTED THAT IN THE PAST HE WAS ACCUSED OF BEING MANIPULATED BY ROMULO BETANCOURT, LATER BY ALBERTO MARTEN, AND NOW BY LUIS BURSTIN (HIS INTERVIEWER).

6. WITH THE EXCEPTION OF EXCELSIOR, WHAT THERE HAS BEEN OF MEDIA REACTION TO FIGUERES' EXTRA-CONSTITUTIONAL IDEA CONTINUES TO BE NEGATIVE. PRIVATE REACTION, ALTHOUGH MIXED, IS PREDOMINANTLY NEGATIVE. REACTION FROM BOTH OPPOSITION AND LIBERATION POLITICAL FORCES IS ALMOST ENTIRELY NEGATIVE. PLN AS A PARTY HAS STILL NOT PRONOUNCED; THE OPPOSITION PARTIES ARE OPPOSED (IN LARGE PART BECAUSE THE PROPOSITION IS FIGUERES').  
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ASSEMBLY PRESIDENT CARRO TOLD EMBOFF THAT HE DOES NOT SEE POSSIBILITIES FOR FIGUERES' EXTRA-CONSTITUTIONAL PROPOSAL, WHICH HE SAYS IS A PROPOSAL OF COUP D'ETAT.

7. THERE ALSO SEEMS TO BE LITTLE SUPPORT FOR A PRESIDENTIAL RE-ELECTION AMENDMENT TO THE CONSTITUTION AT THIS TIME. NO MOVE HAS YET BEEN MADE TO INTRODUCE SUCH A PROPOSAL IN THE ASEMBLY; SOME PLN SOURCES SAY

THERE WILL BE NONE. THE PLN STILL HAS NOT PRONOUNCED ON PRESIDENTIAL RE-ELECTION. KEY OPPOSITION LEADERS (PNI AND PRD) CONTINUE TO OPPOSE. IN SHORT, THE ATMOSPHERE FOR SUCH AN INITIATIVE, SEEMINGLY POSSIBLE LAST WEEK, HAS ALL BUT DISAPPEARED THIS WEEK.

8. COMMENT: FIGUERES' NOVEMBER 3 TELEVISION INTERVIEW WITH BURSTIN WAS PRIMARILY MEANT TO CALM THE PREOCCUPATIONS THAT WERE UNLEASHED BY DON PEPE'S EXTRA-CONSTITUTIONAL DECREE RULE SCHEME. WITH THAT EFFORT ON THE PUBLIC RECORD, AND NO SIGNIFICANT POSITIVE REACTION THERETO, WITH NO MOVEMENT YET DISCERNABLE TO BEGIN TO IMPLEMENT DON PEPE'S IDEAS ON EXECUTIVE DECREE OR A PRESIDENTIAL RE-ELECTION AMENDMENT, AND WITH NO MORE ANNOUNCED FIGUERES/BURSTIN INTERVIEWS ON TAP, FIGUERES AND HIS POLITICAL ADVISERS SEEM TO HAVE DECIDED TO PULL DOWN THEIR BALLOON AND, FOR THE TIME BEING, TO RETHINK THEIR STRATEGY.  
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